

CENTER FOR SOUTH ASIAN STUDIES

University of
Michigan
Fall 2019
Newsletter

Letter from the Director



CONTENTS

- Letter from the Director 2
- Datla Memorial Lecture 3
- Trautmann Honorary Lecture 4
- Trehan Gift to CSAS 4
- Michigan India Conference 5
- South Asia Conference 6
- CSAS Graduate Conference 6
- Library News 6
- U-M Pakistan Conference 7
- WHaLI Initiative Workshops 8
- CSAS Film Series 8
- U-M – University of Puerto Rico Report 9
- CSAS K-12 Teacher Fellowship Program 9
- Faculty News 10
- New Faculty Q&A 10
- CSAS Faculty Associates Receive Awards 11
- Graduate Student News 12
- CSAS International Student Programs 13
- Summer in South Asia Fellows 14
- Making a Gift to CSAS 15
- CSAS Events 16

Cover photo: Dome ceiling of Humayun's Tomb, Delhi
Editors: David Merchant, Clemente Beghi

I'm delighted to welcome everyone

– students, community members, staff and faculty to the 2019-2020 academic year. We have a rich and varied year of events and programming planned for the year, including a range of exciting speakers and conferences. The center is also working on expanding on its digital communications reach and will continue to offer fellowship opportunities that will serve the broad range of interests of our students.

Let me first take the opportunity to thank Will Glover for his capable leadership over the past year. As a member of the CSAS executive committee, I had first hand view of his commitment to the work of the center. Will has left in place some new and capable additions to the staff. Clemente Beghi, our new program coordinator, has plunged into his role with dedication. Clemente has a PhD in Japanese Pre-modern Buddhist Art History from Cambridge University and we are lucky to have someone of his caliber as part of our team. I am also pleased to introduce, Josie Tolin our new India Communications Specialist. Josie is a recent U-M graduate and she manages the Center's social media accounts and creates news stories and podcasts on India. She has also been developing our brand new India Impact website is committed to promoting and expanding ongoing connections between U-M and India. You can find our India Impact project at www.umindiaimpact.org.

We are also lucky to have new members of our community. Sumita Chakraborty is a poet, essayist, and scholar of literary studies who joins us. She is the Helen Zell Visiting Professor in Poetry. Vidya Mohan joined the department of Asian

Languages and Culture last fall as the first Tamil instructor that U-M has had in twelve years. U-M is now one of just 8 colleges in the U.S. with a Tamil program. Swapnil Rai is a Global Media scholar whose work develops global perspectives on Bollywood and the media in India.

It is often the case that as we are lucky to welcome new members of our community, we also sometimes have to say goodbye to precious colleagues. Aswin Punathambekar is considering leaving U-M for an attractive new position at another leading institution. Aswin's intellectual and leadership contributions to the Center have been numerous and invaluable. Over the years, we have benefitted from his knowledge, his collegiality, his hard work and his wholehearted support of the Center. We also thank him for his leadership as Director over the past summer. We wish him the very best for his exciting new future directions.

CSAS has a number of interesting events planned for the upcoming year. The Thomas Trautmann Honorary Lecture of Pre Modern India will be given by Professor Christopher Minkowski from the University of Oxford on September 20. Our second endowed lecture, the Kavita Datla Memorial Lecture on South Asian History will be given by Professor Muzaffar Alam from the University of Chicago on April 17. The center will be hosting two major conferences – our annual U-M Pakistan conference on March 13 and “The Making of the Cambridge History of the Modern Indian Subcontinent” conference on Sept. 24- 25. We will also be hosting a film series in the winter semester with documentaries from the Film South Asia festival. There are many other speakers scheduled who will

share their knowledge on South Asia from a range of perspectives. You can find a full schedule of events at the end of this newsletter.

Other important activities include work by our students. Our undergraduate students fellows continue to conduct research in South Asia. You can learn about the interesting activities of our past fellows from their own perspectives through the summer fellows' blog, <https://sisa.ii.lsa.umich.edu/>. Finally our annual South Asia Graduate Student Conference will be held on January 31.

In addition to our array of events, the center is also participating in the University's Presidential delegation to India in November. We are delighted to be part of this important endeavor and will continue working to expand and strengthen the connections between U-M and India.

As the new academic year begins, I and all of the staff members at CSAS are looking forward to working with you as we continue our efforts in building our community and disseminating knowledge about South Asia. The study of South Asia enriches the intellectual life of U-M in many ways and you will find more information on the past year's activities in this newsletter. We look forward to continuing this work both through our initiatives and conversations at U-M and through our collaborations with intellectual communities and institutions in South Asia.

I look forward to seeing you at upcoming events, all of which are free and open to the public.

Leela Fernandes
Glenda Dickerson Collegiate Professor of Women's Studies and Professor of Political Science

Remembering Kavita Datla

Kavita's life and career were tragically cut short, but she had an incredible passion for the study of history that began to take shape at U-M and lasted through her final days.

On an unusually cold and inclement November evening, a steady crowd of people began to trickle into the U-M Museum of Art's Helmut Stern Auditorium. The below-freezing temperatures couldn't dissuade them from attending a talk by Prof. Sudipta Kaviraj of Columbia University. Among the people who filled the front seats of the hall were the Datla family—parents, brothers and other relatives. Their daughter, Kavita Datla, wasn't in attendance, but everyone felt her presence. Datla received her bachelor's degree in history from the University of Michigan in 1997 and then pursued her master's degree at Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi. She completed her doctorate at the University of California, Berkeley and soon began teaching at Mount Holyoke as an assistant professor in the department of history.

The Center for South Asian Studies (CSAS) organized a lecture series to honor Kavita's work and her passion for research in India, enabled by a generous donation from the Datla family and friends. On asking Vishnu Datla what it means to have a lecture series in the memory of his sister, he said, “Our family and friends are deeply honored to endow this lecture in Kavita's name. We are very much a Michigan family. My parents have lived in the state for nearly 40 years and Kavita, my brother Bobby, and I all attended U-M as undergrads.”

Professor Sudipta Kaviraj, a professor of Indian Politics and Intellectual History, gave an enlightening talk on Dr. B.R.Ambedkar – a social reformer who campaigned against discrimination towards the untouchables in India – and his struggles with history. It was a fitting presentation to honor Kavita Datla, who was passionate about examining the communalization of language politics in India.



“We are very grateful to the CSAS for establishing this lecture because we can't think of a better way to honor Kavita's legacy. She would have been proud to support the study of South Asian History for future generations of scholars at U-M.”

Datla, born in 1975, passed away in July, 2017, after a hard-fought battle with a rare form of cancer. She was an associate professor at Mount Holyoke College at the time of her death and was promoted to full professor post-humously.

“Kavita's life and career were tragically cut short by cancer, but she had an incredible passion for the study of history that began to take shape at U-M and lasted through her final days. We are very grateful to the CSAS for establishing this lecture because we can't think of a better way to honor Kavita's legacy. She would have been proud to support the study of South Asian History for future generations of scholars at U-M,” Vishnu Datla added.

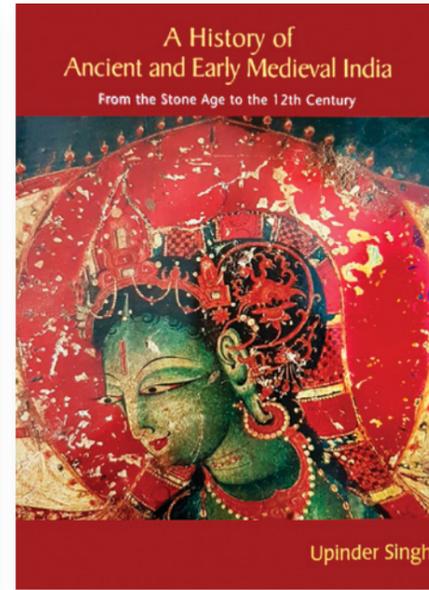
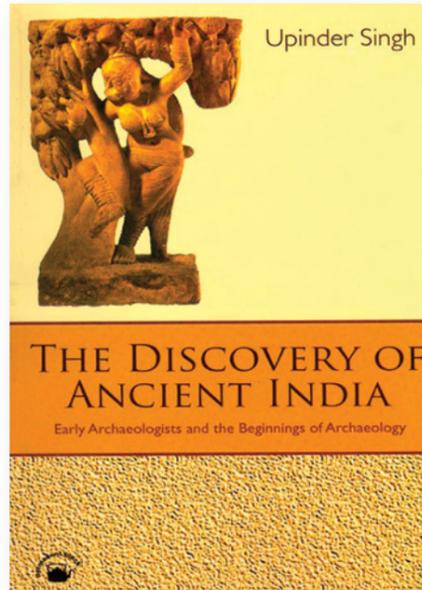
Death need not be the end for scholars and intellectuals, as their work and research continue to live on in the minds and conversations of those who engage their ideas.

This year's lecture will take place on April 17, 2020, and will be delivered by Dr. Muzaffar Alam, George V. Bobrinsky Professor at the Department of South Asian Languages and Civilizations, the University of Chicago, with the title “Who was a Muslim? Religious Ideas and Muslim Identities in Mughal North India.”

Trautmann Honorary Lecture



Dr. Upinder Singh



Last year's first ever Thomas R. Trautmann Honorary Lecture was delivered by Dr. Upinder Singh, Professor of History, Ashoka University, Sonapat. Singh addressed conflict, violence, and resistance in ancient India while encouraging attendees to examine the relationship between violence and the state. She also

Singh addressed conflict, violence, and resistance in ancient India and encouraged examining the relationship between violence and the state.

discussed kingship's legitimization of violence in the social sphere and explored resistance to violence among various social groups. The audience was left with pressing, timely questions about the role of the historian in contemporary discussions about violence, and whether these discussions threaten to dismantle historiographic objectivity.

Her writings range over various aspects of the political, social, economic, religious and intellectual history of ancient India; the history of Indian archaeology; and interactions between India and Southeast Asia. She is the author of *Kings, Brāhmanas, and Temples in Orissa: An Epigraphic Study*; *Ancient Delhi*; *The Discovery of Ancient India: Early*

Archaeologists and the Beginnings of Archaeology; *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India: From the Stone Age to the Twelfth Century*; and *The Idea of Ancient India: Essays on Religion, Politics, and Archaeology*. Her edited books include *Rethinking Early Medieval India*; *Asian Encounters: Exploring Connected Histories* and *Buddhism in Asia: Revival and Reinvention*. Her most recent book is *Political Violence in Ancient India*.

This year's lecture will take place on September 20, 2019, and will be delivered by Dr. Christopher Minkowski, Boden Professor of Sanskrit at the University of Oxford, with the title "Early Readers and Early Readings of the Mahābhārata."



2019 Michigan India Conference

The 10th Annual Michigan India Conference (MIC) was held at the University of Michigan Ross School of Business on February 14th-15, 2019. MIC is one of the largest India-focused conferences in the country, aiming to feature Indian leaders making an impact in India and across the world in all industries, including business, healthcare, politics, and social impact. This year's theme focused on the auspicious future of India's market. With the highest growth rate of any large economy today, India has recently been lauded as the global superpower of the future. With that said, it's only natural to wonder what India needs to do in order to get there. This year's theme was: Moving Beyond Emerging. Many countries have been labeled "Emerging" in the past, but very few have been able to transform beyond this label.

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With over 300 attendees congregating in Ann Arbor from across the Midwest, one of the many influential speakers was Indian yogi and author Sadhguru. He sat down with the MIC board in

Robertson Auditorium to discuss key practices one should follow to stay young and truthful. Later in the day, Dinesh Arora, Deputy CEO of India's flagship healthcare program Ayushman Bharat, spoke about the strides the country has made in making interventions in primary care systems.

The Annual Michigan India Conference proved to be a successful event to bring students, professors and the local community together to brainstorm and probe some of the toughest issues India is facing. We look forward to continue to bring in speakers across a diverse set of industries in spring 2020 at the University of Michigan.



This conference would not be possible without generous sponsorships from both within and outside of the University. The University of Michigan's Center for South Asian Studies, Rackham Student Government, Ross India Initiatives, and Ross C.K. Prahalad Initiatives all played vital roles in organization and funding for this event. A special 'thank you' extends to Mahindra Automotive North America and DIWO, a cognitive decision-making platform.

More info, including sponsors here: <https://www.michiganindiaconference.com/>

Trehan Gift

Thanks to the \$100,000 gift from Ranvir and Adarsh Trehan to support the CSAS mission, CSAS is able to advance its goals of teaching about India and South Asia, and supporting innovative scholarship on the region. This gift enables the Center to deepen its work in various sectors, and particularly in establishing and maintaining institutional relationships in India. Among the various activities supported by the gift planned for this coming year is a film series that will feature many documentaries on India's culture and society.



Adarsh and Ranvir Trehan



Dr. Harry Broadman



D. Shivakumar

South Asia Conference



“Portals and Platforms: Cultures of Entertainment in Digital India” was held on April 19, 2019. The conference was hosted by CSAS and the *Global Media Studies Initiative* in the Department of Communication and Media. This day-long event and screening brought together academics and media practitioners to discuss the rapid digitalization of South Asia’s entertainment landscapes.

The day began with introductory remarks on *Media Entertainment in Digital India* by Aswin Punathambekar (Associate Professor, Communication and Media) and Tupur Chatterjee (Postdoctoral Fellow, Communication and Media) which highlighted the key questions and research sites which constitute South Asia’s digital terrain at large.

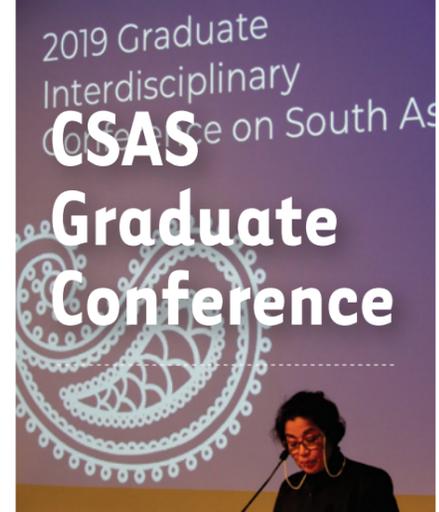
This was followed by the first panel. Tejaswini Ganti’s (Associate Professor, NYU Anthropology) presentation, “*Finding and Creating that ‘Local Connect’: The Centrality of Audiovisual Translation in Contemporary Entertainment Media in India*” discussed her research in Mumbai’s dubbing studios, with a close case study of the Hindi dubbing process for an Indian Netflix original series, *Sacred Games*.

Meheli Sen (Associate Professor, Rutgers African, Middle Eastern and South Asian Languages and Literature), presented on the changing modes of gender and representation in Hindi-language web series in her talk, “*Between Bollywood and a Hard Place: Gender and Politics in Indian Web Series.*”

Sriram Mohan (PhD Candidate, Communication and Media) concluded the morning session with a paper on “*Platforming The Regional: Satire, Streaming Video and Everyday Politics in South India*” which looked at how small and local players in Tamil Nadu were weaving the political into their everyday digital production practices.

The afternoon session was a conversation between two media practitioners from Mumbai, Paromita Vohra (ParoDevi Films, Agents of Ishq) and Ankur Khanna (Producer, RSVP Films), moderated by Aswin Punathambekar. This discussion focused on both how social media-driven content and the mainstream film industry were negotiating the turn to the digital and imagining their new audience terrains.

The day closed with a screening of a recent Bollywood film, *Mard Ko Dard Nahin Hota* (The Man Who Feels No Pain; Vasan Bala, 2019) followed by a Q & A with the film’s producer Ankur Khanna. This screening was held at the historic Michigan Theater and drew a large crowd both from the university and the Ann Arbor community.



The aim of the conference has been to showcase the work of graduate students at the University of Michigan who are working on South Asia.

Professor Indrani Chatterjee from the University of Texas at Austin, was the keynote speaker, with a lecture titled “Pastoral Power, the Premodern and Pluralist Asian Pasts,” in which she revisited the place of hegemonic households in the exercise of specific aspects of governmentality that are missing from Foucault’s discussion of the term.

Library News

New Database: Area Studies-India

The University Library has recently acquired a new database called “Area Studies-India”. It was purchased with Office of Education funds that the Center for South Asian Studies generously gave to the library. This Adam Matthews database includes materials that were originally in microfilm. For more information please check the site: <https://www.amdigital.co.uk/primary-sources/area-studies-india>

During the summer the Library’s South Asia division had an intern, Estrella Salgado, who created an online exhibit entitled: The Ramayana in South & Southeast Asia. Estrella received a Michigan Library Scholars award and worked in the International Studies department. Estrella is a rising junior majoring in History and Museum studies. Please feel free to visit the online display through the Library’s homepage.

UM Pakistan Conference



Panel discussion of intersections between capital, state, and infrastructure. at Pakistan Conference.

The 9th annual University of Michigan (U-M) Pakistan Conference entitled, “Spaces of Capital,” was held on March 30, 2019. Organized by the Center for South Asian Studies (CSAS), the U-M Pakistan Conference is an initiative aimed at highlighting new research in Pakistan while fostering conversations between academics, journalists, activists, and artists. This year’s theme highlighted the interconnections between capital, state, and infrastructure and their role in the everyday relations and social formations of Pakistan.

William Glover (Department of History) and Brittany Puller (Department of Asian Languages and Cultures) offered opening remarks, which were then followed by a panel entitled “Capital Flows.” Amen Jaffer (Lahore University of Management Sciences) and Maira Hayat (Stanford University) both presented papers in this panel. Jaffer’s paper, “Discarded Flows: Circulation and Value in Lahore’s Waste Economy,” analyzed the ways in which labor reproduced and reinstated stigma, hierarchy, and exclusion through the highly visible work of collecting waste. Hayat’s presentation, “10 km of Responsibility: Adjudications of the Public-ness of Water in Pakistan,” demonstrated the intersections between public, private, and judicial responsibility in combatting climate change through water resource management.

The following panel entitled “The Social Life of Capital” held papers from Nicolas Martin (University of Zurich) and Muhammad Ali Jan (University of Oxford). Martin’s paper, “Democracy and Discrimination: Comparing Caste-Based Politics in Indian and Pakistani Punjab,” discussed and compared the evolution of caste discrimination and mobilization of Muslim, Christian, and Sikh communities in both India and Pakistan. Jan’s presentation, “The Social Origins of Capital: Trajectories of Industrialization in Pakistani Punjab,” explored the variation of kinship and labor networks amid the rise of capital in rural Punjab, highlighting the importance of a regional framework analysis.

This year’s theme highlighted the interconnections between capital, state, and infrastructure and their role in the everyday relations and social formations of Pakistan.

Saima Zaidi (Habib University) thereafter presented on her exhibit, *Sheherzade: The Walled City Anthology*. Zaidi’s presentation included artwork from her art installation in the walled city of Lahore. This project entailed the



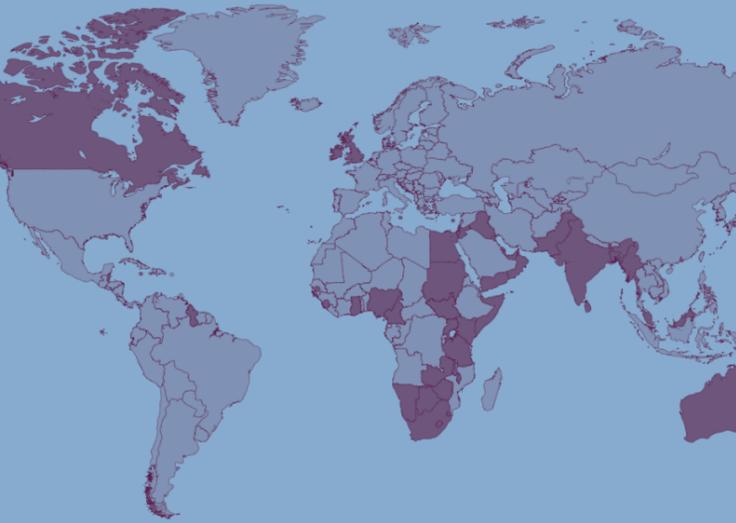
collaboration of artists, craftsmen, designers, architects, and graphic designers to recreate and display art within the walled city. In turn, this project created a space for community awareness, tourism, and cultural heritage.

Following Zaidi’s panel was a screening of the documentary, “Perween Raman: The Rebel Optimist.” Direct Mahera Omar’s film documents the life, work, and final moments of Perween Raman, an architect and urban planner in Karachi. Her work on the Orangi Pilot Project served to develop affordable sanitation models to serve the lower-class community of Orangi while challenging the water and land mafias.

Matthew Hull (Department of Anthropology) concluded this year’s conference by engaging panelists in a discussion regarding the panels’ intersections between capital, state, and infrastructure. The panel discussants also offered their reflections on the state of the field in Pakistan Studies.

This conference was made possible by the generous support of the American Institute of Pakistan Studies, as well as a number of units at the U-M. This conference was also funded in part by a Title VI federal grant from the US Department of Education.

World History and Literature Initiative

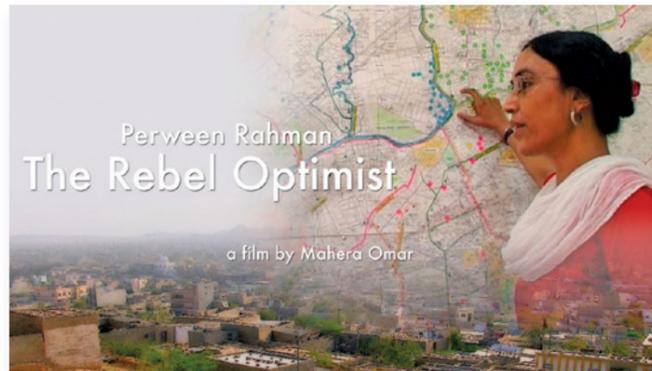


Established in 2009, the World History and Literature Initiative (WHaLI) is an ongoing, collaborative effort between area studies Centers at the International Institute and the U-M School of Education. This yearly, three-day workshop -- funded in part by Title VI grants from the U.S. Department of Education, with additional funding from the International Institute and the Eisenberg Institute for Historical Studies -- strives to improve the ability of K-12 teachers to teach world history through exposure to new classroom materials and resources.

This year's workshop will focus on empire, decolonization, and independence in global history and literature.

This year's workshop will focus on empire, decolonization, and independence in global history and literature and will be held December 6-7 and December 14, 2019. Drawing on different historical examples, WHaLI will discuss imperial systems and uprisings, as well as decolonization and independence movements. WHaLI aims not only to promote teachers' knowledge of global empires and imperial practices, but also to explore the challenges of teaching this content and ways to make the information accessible to students.

CSAS Film Series



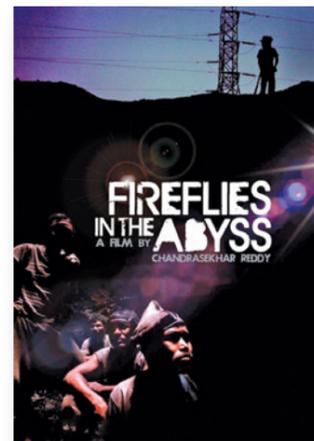
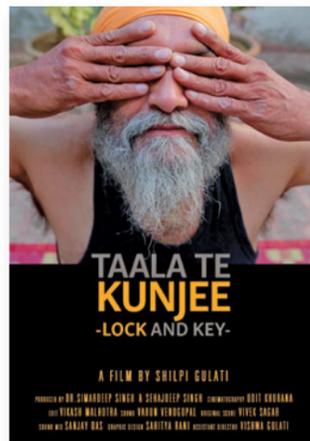
Partnering with Professor Jyotika Virdi and the University of Windsor, CSAS screened 6 award winning documentaries from the 2018 Film South Asia film festival (Kathmandu, Nepal). The series was part of what is called Travelling Film South Asia (TFSA), a special package sent around the globe, with the best movies of the festival, encapsulating the various flavours of the Indian subcontinent.

The films drew interest not only among the U-M community, but also among the local Ann Arbor public, and that of Southeast Michigan in general.

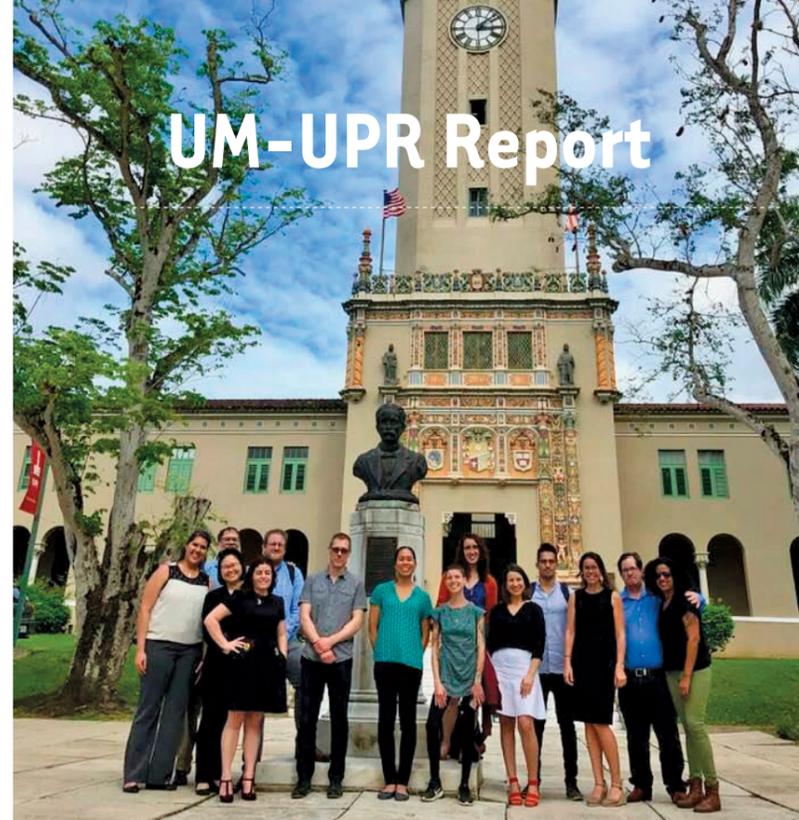
The films screened were: *Fireflies in the Abyss*, *Soz – A Ballad of Madadies*, *Is it too Much to Ask*, *Perween Rahman: The Rebel Optimist*, *Lock and Key*, and *Rasan Piya*.

Shilpi Gulati, the director of *Lock and Key*, was present at the screening of her documentary and shared with us behind-the-scene aspects of the documentary making process.

This year, 12 films will be screened during the Winter Term, on Wednesdays, from 1/15 to 4/8, starting at 6:30pm.



UM-UPR Report



This year CSAS again participated in the fifth annual joint University of Puerto Rico and University of Michigan symposium. As part of the effort to create sustainable links with institutions serving underrepresented populations, CSAS and several other National Resource Centers at the International Institute have built a partnership with the Colleges of Education, Humanities, and Social Sciences at the University of Puerto Rico. There are no Title VI National Resource Centers on the island of Puerto Rico; there are also no Hispanic serving institutions in the State of Michigan. Thanks to deep existing ties between our institutions, we are able to extend access to area studies and language resources at U-M to faculty and students at UPR, to in-service teachers in the region around UPR, and to their K-12 students. Each year, the International Institute sends mixed delegations of area studies experts to UPR for a K-16 professional and curriculum development symposium and workshop organized around topics that cross multiple disciplines and allow representation from different world regions.

The annual symposium aims to create a space in which graduate students from both universities can share innovative ways of studying concepts, as well as intersections with other categories and topics. Among them, but not excluding others, are intersections of civil and human rights, political traditions, migration, identity politics, religion, political participation, public education, memory, gender, race, sexuality, neoliberalism, nationalism, and cultural policies.

At the 2019 U-M-UPR Symposium entitled, "Race, Ethnicity, and Nationalism Across Borders," graduate students from U-M and UPR, working from many disciplines, methodologies, and historical contexts, presented on topics concerning border tensions, questions of racial and ethnic identity, and nationalism. One CSAS student, Janaki Phillips was among the presenters. Phillips, a third year PhD student in sociocultural anthropology gave a presentation based on her preliminary dissertation fieldwork titled, "Haunted Houses and the Colonial Experience in India."

CSAS K-12 Teacher Fellowship Program

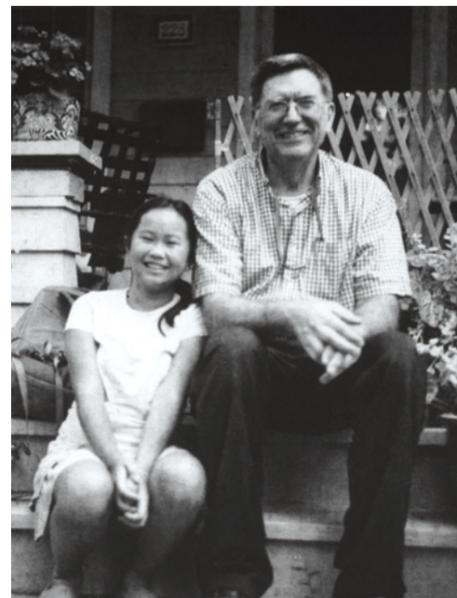
Thanks to the funding from the Department of Education, CSAS has been able to institute the K-12 Teacher Fellowship Program. The fellowship's goal is to sponsor 1 teacher per academic year to develop South Asia curriculum modules for K-12 classrooms, which will be shared publicly on our website and through platforms such as the National Council for the Social Studies.

The Teacher Fellow will be provided with access to the University of Michigan library and mentoring from the South Asia librarian and faculty experts, as well as an honorarium for the educational material prepared, and a trip to South Asia.

Our first fellow is Stephen Boyce, from Pioneer High school in Ann Arbor.

"As a social studies teacher at Pioneer High School I have struggled for years to make our World History and Geography course more informed and more engaging. This past school year I was honored to become a part of the educational outreach of the Center for South Asian studies.

Attending the conferences and film showings of the Center, as well as talking to staff members and visiting scholars, has helped me enormously in critiquing and working to improve our South Asian curriculum. The highlight of my world history classes was undoubtedly the Asian Humanities fair held in May. With the assistance of the International Institute, students hosted tables promoting language study opportunities and cultural awareness of East and South Asia.



Stephen Boyce with his daughter Noa

My students from India, Bangladesh, Korea and China were particularly helpful in representing their heritage. We have made enormous progress this past school year with the help of all the area study centers and in particular the Center for South Asian Center."



Stephen Rush The Summer Program in Music and Yoga, now 14 years old, provides an opportunity for UM students to go to Mysore, India and study in the homes of music and dance teachers there (135 students have participated over the years). Students perform a final program in India, then again here on campus. They take 15 lessons over the course of a month, and attend many concerts and lectures - on such topics as Race, Gender, Film and Indian history (including Yoga and Mahabharata).



Inderjit Kaur was awarded a UMOR grant for her project on transnationalism, titled *Sikh Sacred Song and the Affective Makings of a New Pilgrimage and Home(land) in the Indian Ocean World*.

Her article, "Transnational Affects, Transnational Worldings: Sikhs Sounding Sacred Songs, Making Multiple Worlds" was published in the special issue of *Civilisations* (2018, Vol 67) on *Sounding Religious Transnationalism*.



Swapnil Rai
Assistant Professor,
Department of Film,
Television, and Media

CSAS: Tell us about your research interests and what brought you to the University of Michigan.

Swapnil Rai: My research broadly engages with media industry studies, its interrelationship with the economics and sociology of media and its interplay with questions of power, gender, race and representation. I primarily focus on South Asia as a centripetal organizing force to study global media industries and media flows in the BRICs (Brazil, Russia, India, China) region. My current book project is about the history of global flows of Indian films and the role of the star in Bollywood production culture and industry globalization.

Another project that I am currently developing focuses on emergent digital media platforms and nodes such as Netflix and Amazon Prime Video. As these over the top platforms expand to diverse global regions, their international presence begets questions about censorship, localization of content and rekindles debates about west- to-the rest pattern of media flows. I plan to analyze these questions in relation to the rise of nascent OTT nodes such as Netflix, Amazon Prime Video and Apple TV.

LSA and the Film, Television and Media department are a great fit for my research interests. The interdisciplinary and collaborative research culture at UofM, the size of the South Asian Studies program and the Global Media Studies initiative were very appealing for me. I am thrilled to be a part of such a dynamic community of scholars.

CSAS: Have you discovered any good secrets about Ann Arbor yet?

Swapnil Rai: Yes! I have discovered a few. The first is the Washtenaw Dairy and their delectable ice cream. The second is the Bird Hills nature area where I've spotted quite a few lovely birds including Purple Finches and Blue Jays. It is an amazing hike and trail. I am looking forward to exploring more of Ann Arbor.

CSAS: What will you be teaching this year and what would you like to accomplish in your spare time?

Swapnil Rai: In the Fall I will be teaching a class on Television History. In the Winter term I will be teaching two courses, one on Transnational Women's Cinema and the other on Global Media.



Sumita Chakraborty
Helen Zell Visiting
Professor in Poetry

CSAS: Tell us about your research interests and what brought you to the University of Michigan.

Professor Chakraborty: I'm a poet and a scholar, and the main thing that brings me to the University of Michigan is its thriving poetry community both in creative writing and in literary studies. I have admired the work of a number of the poets and scholars at Michigan for a very long time, and I'm thrilled to be joining them as a colleague. My first book of poetry, *Arrow*, is forthcoming from Alice James Books in the U.S. and Carcanet Press in the U.K. in September 2020; in the meanwhile, I have begun work on a second collection of poems. I'm also working on a scholarly manuscript tentatively titled *The Poetics of Ethics in the Anthropocene*. Whereas the classical ethical question is often thought to be "How is one to live," I argue that in the Anthropocene—an epoch that was founded upon radicalized, gendered, and colonial violence, and a term that originated to contend with ecological violence—that question might be better understood as "How is one to die?" This project argues that poetic rhetoric offers a range of strategies for speaking with and within the concept of "death," and that those strategies, in turn, can offer surprising resources for re-conceptualizing ethical relationality in this fraught moment.

Beyond the extraordinarily large and diverse group of poets and poetics scholars at Michigan, I am also excited to be joining a public institution with

such a broad range of areas of excellence. Interdisciplinary communities with a variety of scholarly and artistic strengths have always inspired and excited me, and I look forward to experiencing all of what the U of M offers. One example: after I settle in a bit, I plan to become involved in the Prison Creative Arts Project, with which I've already had the chance to correspond with a little and profile for a journal called *At Length* while I was *At Length's* art editor.

CSAS: Have you discovered any good secrets about Ann Arbor yet?

Professor Chakraborty: I haven't yet moved to Ann Arbor, so I'm afraid I have no access to any Ann Arbor secrets! But I look forward to discovering them—or, more accurately, thinking I've discovered them, since I imagine those who have been in Ann Arbor already know a great deal more about the area than I will as a new transplant. I am excited to have already learned about the partnership between One Pause Poetry and White Lotus Farms: I've been invited to read at White Lotus in September, and it looks like a stunning venue. But

I can't imagine that's a secret, or at least I hope it isn't, because they seem wonderful!

CSAS: What will you be teaching this year and what would you like to accomplish in your spare time?

Professor Chakraborty: In the fall term, I'll be teaching two upper-level undergraduate English courses that are very much up the alley of my research interests. English 320: *Literature and the Environment*, for which my theme is "Writing in a Time of Extinction," will ask how contemporary writers are imagining the world in the midst of the change, destruction, and dislocation associated with what has been termed the sixth mass extinction event. How have a range of writers across subject positions defined "environment," their relation to it, and their place within it? And in English 442: *Studies in Poetry*, for which my theme is "Conversations With Dead People," we'll examine the strategies that poets have used to imagine themselves as capable of speaking to the dead. In addition to rhetorical devices (like apostrophe, personification, prosopopoeia, and more) that poets have used to stage conversations with

the dead, we'll also take a look at the wild history of poets—including W. B. Yeats, Sylvia Plath, and Lucille Clifton—who have used material means like Ouija boards, mediums, and automatic writing to communicate with spirits. Then, in the winter term, I'm very excited to be slated to teach a graduate creative writing workshop in poetry.

As for my spare time: I love baking, and I plan on putting the oven in my apartment through its paces. I'm also a huge sports fan, but my allegiances have so far been to professional sports teams, since I've neither attended nor worked at a university with much of a sports culture. I'm super excited to finally have a way in to college sports and look forward to becoming obnoxiously obsessed with all things Wolverines—a friend of mine has already given me a "Go Blue" T-shirt. I also really want to learn more about the literary and arts communities in Detroit; I am excited to already be in touch with the wonderful folks at Inside Out Literary Arts, which is dedicated to cultivating the literary and academic skills of Detroit's youth.

CSAS Faculty Associates Receive Prestigious Awards



Professor **Gaurav Desai** of the English Department received a Michigan Humanities Award for his book-in-progress, *Shifting Currents: Material and Conceptual Mobilities in the Indian Ocean World*. The book engages with ongoing conversations in oceanic studies, mobility studies, and material culture studies.

LSA Anthropology's Professor **Matthew Hull** won the 2019 J.I. Staley Prize for his book, *Government of Paper: The Materiality of Bureaucracy in Urban Pakistan*. The yearly prize recognizes outstanding scholarship and writing in anthropology. Its recipients receive a cash award of \$7,500.

LSA Communications Professor **Aswin Punathambekar** and PhD candidate **Sriram Mohan** received the Katherine Singer Kovács Essay Award for their paper, "A Sound Bridge: Listening for the Political in a Digital Age." The



Michigan Medicine's Dr. **Vineet Chopra** was selected as this year's Michigan Institute for Clinical Health and Research (MICHR) Distinguished Clinical and Translational

Research Mentor. The award celebrates faculty who provide high-quality mentorship in clinical and translational research.

piece was originally published in the *International Journal of Communication*.



LSA English Professor **Aliyah Khan** is the winner of this year's Helen Tartar First Book Subvention Award. Her winning manuscript -- *Far from Mecca: Globalizing the Muslim Caribbean*,

forthcoming from Rutgers University Press in 2020 -- was selected by the American Comparative Literature Association.



Helen Zell Visiting Professor in Fiction, **Akil Kumarasamy**, made the long list for the PEN/Robert W. Bingham Prize for Debut Fiction with her short story collection, *Half Gods*. Kumarasamy also received the Story Prize Spotlight Award for her debut collection.

Graduate Student News



Sriram Mohan, a PhD candidate in the Department of Communication Studies, re-

ceived the Katherine Singer Kovács Essay Award from the Society of Cinema and Media Studies in March 2019 for an article titled “A Sound Bridge: Listening for the Political in a Digital Age,” co-authored with Aswin Punathambekar and published in the *International Journal of Communication* in November 2017. Sriram was also the lead author of a paper titled “Localizing YouTube: Language, Cultural Regions, and Digital Platforms” published in the *International Journal of Cultural Studies* in April 2019. And in July 2019, “Global Digital Cultures: Perspectives from South Asia,” an edited volume co-authored by Aswin Punathambekar and Sriram, was published by the University of Michigan Press and made available via open access.



Brittany Puller is a PhD Student in the Department of Asian Languages and Cultures.

Puller was awarded research grants from the Global Islamic Studies Center and Rackham Graduate School to conduct preliminary research in India during the summer of 2019. She also received Foreign Language and Area Studies fellowships for Punjabi and Persian language study. She will be presenting her work at the University of Toronto’s Graduate Conference on South Asian Religions in the fall.



Megh Marathe is a PhD candidate in the School of Information working

at the intersection of medical anthropology, disability studies, and science & technology studies. They conduct ethnographic fieldwork with neurologists and people with epilepsy (including Megh) to study the chronic contingency of both the clinical diagnosis and the lived experience of epilepsy. In 2018-19, Megh received a dissertation research grant from Microsoft Research, a public scholarship award from the Rackham program in public scholarship, and a mini-grant from the UM Initiative in Disability Studies. They also helped organize the annual symposium of the UM program in Science, Technology & Society.



Vishal Khandelwal is a doctoral candidate in the History of Art department whose

work focuses on the intellectual and cultural history of industrial design and art in India between the 1960s and 80s. This last academic year he received grants from the Rockefeller Archive Center and The Decorative Arts Trust for his dissertation research. He also designed and taught a Spring Term undergraduate seminar at Michigan in 2019 on issues of gender and sexuality in nineteenth-and-twentieth-century South Asian art and visual culture.



Naivedya Parakkal, a PhD Student in Educational Studies, Educational Foundations

and Policies, recently received a Ma Scholarship. She is interested in issues of international development, empire and education, and exploring decolonial alternatives to dominant educational paradigms. In her research, Parakkal examines how youth from historically marginalized communities in the global south (focusing on South Asia), navigate the process of (un)learning local/indigenous epistemologies in order to accommodate, resist, and transform hegemonic discourses around globalization, development, and modernity. Parakkal plans to write and defend her dissertation proposal next term.



Dana Kornberg's dissertation, which she is simultaneously working on as a book

project, draws on 20 months of ethnographic fieldwork in Delhi to explain how the informal garbage collection and recycling system has survived the threat of mechanization and displacement. She is pleased to announce the publication of a first piece from this project: Kornberg, Dana. 2019. “Garbage as Fuel: Pursuing Incineration to Counter Stigma in Postcolonial Urban India.” *Local Environment*, 24(1): 1-17.



Shourjendra N. Mukherjee is a 2nd year PhD student in the Doctoral Program in

History. Mukherjee is interested in a longer pre-history and history of the post-partition neighbourhoods in Delhi. Starting from the anti-Sikh genocide of 1984, Mukherjee seeks to move back in time to understand the quotidian lives and the making of Delhi as the urban space, which was the backdrop of the violence. He spent most of the 2019 summer meeting octogenarian Sikh partition refugees in Delhi and rummaging through the archives in Delhi in search of the documentary traces of Delhi’s making.

CSAS International Student Programs



Sujay Paranjape

CSAS spent a wonderful Friday morning kayaking the Huron River with the students. We asked them about their experiences in the program so far. Here’s IISER student Sujay Paranjape on his studies, research, and favorite places in Ann Arbor:

CSAS: *What do you study, and why did you decide to come to the University of Michigan for the summer?*

Sujay Paranjape: I study chemical ecology at IISER-Pune. I applied for this program because Michigan is known for its ecology and evolutionary biology department and I wanted to do fieldwork in plant biology. So I focused on labs in plant biology, and then I got into one.

CSAS: *What has your research consisted of so far?*

SJ: I've done fieldwork most of the time in sun and rain; I've been digging up field plots and sowing seeds. I think the farming experience was something I did not have in India. It's very different, how you farm here and how you farm back home.

CSAS: *Where in Ann Arbor have you been farming?*

SJ: My fields are in the Matthei Botanical Gardens. We have eleven plots there scattered around the garden, about 50 meters apart from each

This year, we were lucky to host seven students from IISER-Pune in India and one student from Habib University in Pakistan. The students lived in the International House for ten weeks. They cooked and ate communally, attending Ann Arbor events like Summerfest and Shakespeare in the Arb on their occasional breaks from research and classes.

other. We are mostly growing weeds in there. We study their resistance to herbicides, because most of the weeds are resistant to herbicides, and that’s really a problem for the farmers.

CSAS: *What else have you learned about herbicides?*

SJ: One of the herbicides we are using is obsolete now. It’s just useless on any farm. Most of the weeds have a resistance to them, especially the morning glories. I study this same genera back home in a different context, but my knowledge on it has grown throughout my time here.

CSAS: *So, switching gears to the kayaking trip -- it wasn't your first time kayaking, right?*

SJ: No, I've white water rafted in India so it was close enough. That's a bit more strenuous and the kayaking was really cool. I think I was tired towards the end but the detour upstream was fun. I kayaked again this Thursday with my lab mates and we finished the entire trip in one hour.

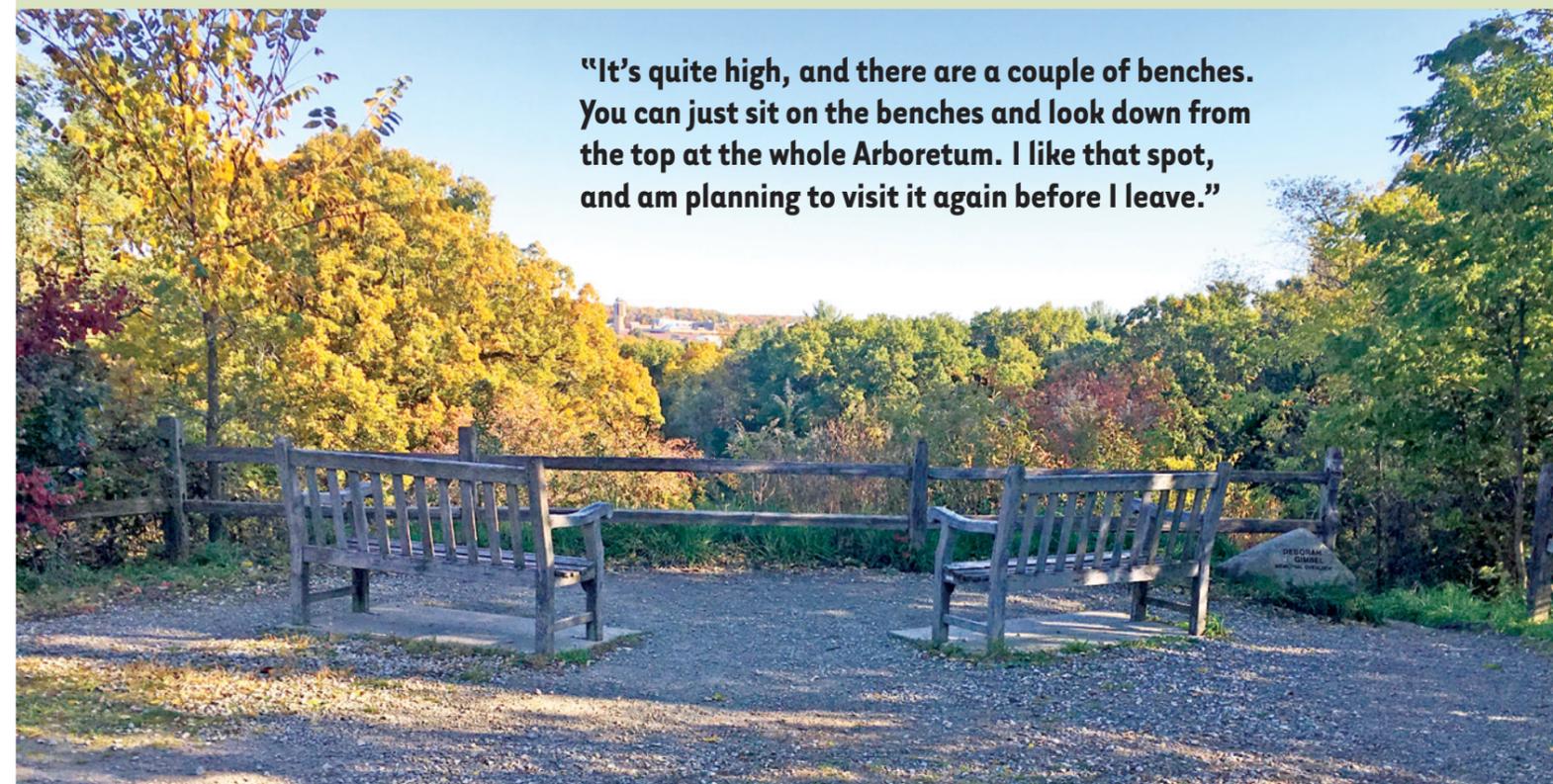
CSAS: *And how long do you think it took us?*

SJ: It took us three or three-and-a-half hours, I think.

CSAS: *Do you have any favorite spots in Ann Arbor?*

SJ: I like this one spot in the Nichols Arboretum, towards the north side. I've taken a couple of pictures there. It's quite high, and there are a couple of benches. You can just sit on the benches and look down from the top at the whole arboretum. I like that spot, and am planning to visit it again before I leave.

For a full, podcast version of our conversation with Sujay and the rest of the IISER-Pune cohort, visit www.umindiaimpact.org.



“It’s quite high, and there are a couple of benches. You can just sit on the benches and look down from the top at the whole Arboretum. I like that spot, and am planning to visit it again before I leave.”

Summer in South Asia Fellows 2019

Organized in 2006 with a generous donation from an anonymous donor, the Summer in South Asia Undergraduate Fellowship (SISA) has provided over 100 students with funding for research and internships in India. Please join us on October 4 for the Summer in South Asia Symposium or visit the blog (<https://sisa.ii.lsa.umich.edu>) to learn more about the 2019 SISA fellows' time in India.



Brennan Burrows is a freshman planning to study public health sciences. His future plans

include attending medical school, becoming a surgeon, and working with underserved populations. During his 2 months in India, Brennan plans to develop his passion for healthcare by interning with the Smile Foundation in Delhi. Here, he will be interning in a program called "Smile on Wheels," where Brennan's project will investigate the burden of diseases affecting different locations receiving healthcare from Smile Foundation. He will then travel to two of these locations in Surat and Kolkata, volunteering with the mobile health clinics.



Virginie De Smet is a freshman pursuing a dual degree in business administration

and chemistry with a minor in math. After graduating, she plans to work in life science consulting, and later in life she hopes to be doing work for a non-profit organization. Virginie will be spending her time in India working with an NGO focused on clean water initiatives. She will be gathering information about the economic

implications from the lack of access to clean water and the socio-cultural challenges that face sustainable implementation of initiatives.



Sachit Grover is a junior studying marketing and strategy. In correspondence to his business

school curriculum, he has two minors in acting and performing arts management. He is very interested in the intersection of business within the entertainment industry—specifically Bollywood, the Indian film industry. He will be volunteering for four weeks in May 2019 at a Bollywood film production company this summer to learn the ins and outs of how movies are made and marketed start to finish. He wants to specifically understand how social justice movies are made and how sensitive topics are addressed to the public. Upon graduation, he aims to work full time in the Bollywood industry. One of his goals in the future is to create an arts organization for underprivileged children which will help recruit talent for the Bollywood industry.



Alec Ockaskis is a first year senior studying percussion performance and music

education with the intent of a platform career teaching and performing in inner-city Detroit. Using education as a platform, Alec intends to engage with the community through his other interests in music performance, graphic design, photography & videography, and instrument design and construction. Alec will be spending five weeks in Varanasi studying Tabla under the

Banaras gharana. In doing so, he hopes to gain a deeper insight into the relationship between teacher and student. With this, a greater dialogue can be met in addressing a more holistic approach to current music education.



Joseph Pongrac is a sophomore pursuing a BS in biopsychology, cognition, neuroscience

and a minor in business administration. He has concentrated on personality and relationship psychology with special interest in stress and hormones. He aspires to earn an MD to gain a holistic perspective on healthcare from hospital administration to patient care. With this, he plans to continue exploring the intersection between business and healthcare. His goals include increasing access to healthcare internationally and optimizing non-profit health organizations in order to alleviate healthcare inequities in developing regions.



Rachael Rich is a sophomore majoring in biopsychology, cognition, and neuroscience,

and works for two research labs at U-M; Ethan Kross' Emotion & Self Control Lab, and Robin Edelstein's Relationships & Hormones Lab. After graduation, she plans to attend graduate school to pursue a PhD in psychology. Rachael will be spending a portion of her summer with UM-MEED, an NGO that works holistically to promote emotional and psychological wellness for people from socially and economically deprived backgrounds. Her final project will highlight mental health stigmas and disparities

for men and women in India, and pose answers to questions regarding societal norms within psychological counseling.



Shannon Shaughnessy is a junior studying psychology with a minor in international

studies. She is particularly interested in the intersection of culture and psychology in adolescents. After graduation, she hopes to get a PhD and work with children in a research setting. Shannon will be spending eight weeks in Bangalore volunteering for Enabling Leadership, a nonprofit that helps cultivate leadership skills in children through innovative soccer, music, and LEGO programs. She will help create and validate a new scale to measure life skill attainment in the children. Shannon's final project will explore how EL's programs lead to an overall improvement in mental health.



Blaine Teahan is a sophomore in studying biochemistry with admission to the School

of Public Health pending. He has interests in global and community health and aim to extend healthcare to underserved communities. He also has interests in biomedical research and works in the Muntean lab in the U-M Medical School, studying leukemia. Upon graduation, he hopes to join the Peace Corps, and then likely pursue a postgraduate education—whether that be in medicine, public health, or biomedical research. Other interests include soccer, ultimate frisbee, travel, and Mandarin Chinese.



Omar Uddin is a sophomore majoring in business administration with

a minor in writing. Education equality will be his reflection topic, as he examines the ways leaders in India are resolving inequities in education. In America, where our class hierarchy is heavily ingrained, major education inequities run along racial and social class lines. Finding solutions to these issues is his life goal.



Ryan Woock is a sophomore planning to study public policy with

minors in Asian studies and business. Post-graduation, he plans to work in international relations, investment banking, or attend law school. Ryan will be staying in Pondicherry to work with Prime Trust, a microfinance NGO. He will primarily focus on local women's groups, identifying and developing projects to promote economic self-sufficiency. He also hopes to gain insight into how the new regulatory environment has affected the day-to-day operations of the organization.

CSAS IS DEDICATED to promoting a broader and deeper understanding of the region—its histories, cultures, languages, and people—through research, education, and outreach programs. CSAS is committed to creating a supportive environment where scholars, educators, students, and the community have the opportunity to engage in dialogue and to study current and historical events related to South Asia.

CSAS gifts help support internships, student groups, faculty and student travel, workshops and lectures, visiting scholars, artists and performers, and special courses related to South Asia.

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CSAS Lecture Series 2019-2020

September 13, 2019

David Brick, Assistant Professor of Sanskrit Literature at the University of Michigan

Widows Under Hindu Law: an Overview
4:30 pm • Room 110 • Weiser Hall

September 20, 2019

Thomas R. Trautmann Honorary Lecture
Christopher Minkowski, Boden Professor of Sanskrit at the University of Oxford

Early Readers and Early Readings of the Maha-bha-rata
4:30 pm • Room 110 • Weiser Hall

October 4, 2019

Summer in South Asia Symposium
4:30 pm • 10th floor • Weiser Hall

October 11, 2019

Subir Sinha, Senior Lecturer in Institutions and Development at the University of London

Of Commodities and Frontiers: Looking for “Capitalism” on the Edges of Britain’s Indian Colonies
4:30 pm • Room 110 • Weiser Hall

October 24-25, 2019

The Making of the Cambridge History of the Modern Indian Subcontinent Conference
Room 1014 • Tisch Hall

November 1, 2019

Debjani Ganguly, Professor of English and Director Institute of the Humanities and Global Cultures, University of Virginia

World Literature, the Global South and Indian Ocean Worlds
4:30 pm • Room 110 • Weiser Hall

November 22, 2019

Devesh Kapur, Starr Foundation Professor of South Asian Studies and Director of Asia Programs at Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies

The Indian State that Fails and Delivers
4:30 pm • Room 110 • Weiser Hall

December 5, 2019

EIHS Lecture

Samia Khatun, Associate Professor of History at the University of Liberal Arts, Bangladesh
The Pen and a Sea of Pearls: Decolonising Contemporary Historical Storytelling
4pm • Room 1014 • Tisch Hall

Every Wednesday

January 22 - April 1, 2020

Documentaries from the Traveling Film South Asia Series
6:30 pm • Room 555 • Weiser Hall

DATE 00, 2020

Lecturer Name, Professor in some field of study at collegiate institution

Lecture title lecture title lecture title
lecture title lecture title lecture title
4:30 pm • Room 110 • Weiser Hall

January 31, 2020

Graduate Interdisciplinary Conference on South Asia Friday
10th floor • Weiser Hall

February 14, 2020

Muhammad Q. Zaman, Professor of Near Eastern Studies and Religion at Princeton University’s Department of Religion
Islam and the Lessons of Pakistan’s History
4:30 pm • Room 110 • Weiser Hall

March 13, 2020

10th U-M Pakistan Conference
10th floor • Weiser Hall

March 27, 2020

Tarangini Sriraman, Professor of Politics and History at Azim Premji University in India
In defence of collateral evidence: Refugees and Post-Partition IDs in Delhi
4:30 pm • Room 110 • Weiser Hall

April 3, 2020

Vivek Bald, Comparative Media Studies at MIT
The Price of Acceptability: On South Asian Inclusion and Exclusion in the U.S.
4:30 pm • Room 110 • Weiser Hall

April 17, 2020

Kavita S. Datla Memorial Lecture
Muzaffar Alam, Professor in South Asian Languages and Civilizations at the University of Chicago
Who was a Muslim? Religious Ideas and Muslim Identities in Mughal North India
4:30 pm • 10th floor • Weiser Hall

All events are free and open to the public. A complete and updated list can be found on our website, ii.umich.edu/csas/news-events/events.html



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